



2018 Municipal Election Report on Accessibility



Background

This report has been prepared in accordance with Section 12.1(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, which requires the City Clerk / Returning Officer to prepare a report about the identification, removal and prevention of barriers that affect electors and candidates with disabilities and make the report available to the public.

Section 12.1 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, specifies that a Clerk who is responsible for conducting an election shall have regard for the needs of electors and candidates with disabilities. Subsection 45(2) of the Act requires that in establishing the locations of voting places, the Clerk shall ensure that each voting place is accessible to electors with disabilities. Providing accessible elections is also one of the core principles guiding the City of Vaughan's Election Services team in planning and delivering the 2018 Municipal Election.

A threefold approach was taken to planning accessibility for the 2018 Municipal Election. Firstly, every facility identified as a voting place had to be physically accessible, ensuring that there were to be no physical barriers to persons with disabilities from entering the voting place and exercising their right to vote, or to otherwise participate in the election on behalf of a candidate or as election officials. Secondly, the need of voters with disabilities other than those relating to physical accessibility were to be addressed so far as reasonably possible. The third and final element focused on communications and training.



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Physical Accessibility at Voting Places

Accessibility Assessments of Voting Places

City staff conducted accessibility assessments of all voting places which were not previously assessed and utilized as voting places at the 2014 Municipal Election. Elections Ontario shared the results of their site assessments which were also used to validate the continued accessibility of voting places used previously. Voting place accessibility assessments included measuring door and ramp widths, turning radii, the availability of automatic accessible door entrances, suitable lighting, access to accessible parking and suitable pathways to access rooms used for voting.

City of Vaughan Facilities

City facilities were used extensively during the election for meetings, training and voting. All City facilities were fully accessible. One complaint was received about the Garnett A. Williams Community Centre which was a designated voting place on voting day. The concern was in respect to the steep grade of a primary hallway inside the building. It is recommended that in future, signage be provided to identify entrances to the voting place which are at grade for ease of those individuals with mobility challenges accessing the voting place via the hallway in question.



School Board Facilities

The York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board both designated voting day as a PA Day again for the 2018 Municipal Election. This had the benefit of reducing parking congestion at schools designated as voting places, allowing voters to park closer to the entrance. No significant accessibility concerns were raised in respect of any voting place assigned to a school board facility.

Election officials reported an issue at St. Andrew Catholic Elementary School where a set of accessible doors were blocked with a barrier and a do not enter sign. The school custodians were contacted and the temporary barrier and signage was removed for electors to access.



Condominiums

Election Services staff inventoried occupied condominiums in the City of Vaughan and contacted their property management in January, 2018 about designating space inside as a voting place for their residents. Initial contact was made by mail and email, including a letter from the City Clerk requesting use of their property as a voting place and an agreement to complete, requesting considerations including:

- a) That the space provided be accessible to election officials between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. on voting day;
- b) That the space be open and unobstructed to permit free access for all voters during voting hours;

- c) That the space be clean, well-lit and comfortably heated with washroom facilities available for election officials;
- d) Telephone service for election officials if required;
- e) Be free of any campaign literature or advertising material;
- f) Accessible electrical outlets available to power the vote tabulator; and
- g) Sufficient chairs and tables to accommodate election officials and privacy screens for voters.

Additional follow-up was made by email and telephone from those locations which did not respond to initial communications from Election Services staff. In total, staff contacted 54 properties and received agreements from 50 of them.

In circumstances where a condominium was not utilized as a voting place, voters were assigned to a voting place at a school board or City of Vaughan facility. Efforts were made to circulate posters to property management at condominiums which were occupied after the identification of condominium voting places, to advertise voting day information including the school board or City facility they were assigned to.

Removal of Physical Barriers

The layout of voting places included sufficient space for a five-foot turning radius between tables and privacy screens for voters. This ensured sufficient space was incorporated into the layout for ease of movement for those voters who require the assistance of mobility devices such as walkers and wheelchairs.

When designing the layout for the voting places, extra seating was included in the plan for use by voters and scrutineers. Election officials were instructed during training to be attentive to voters requiring the assistance of a chair while waiting in lines as needed.

Non-physical Barriers

Accessible Voting Appliance

The City Hall voting place was outfitted with an accessible voting appliance that helped address the needs of voters who might have difficulty in negotiating a paper ballot throughout the eight-day advance vote period from October 11 to the 18th, from 10:00 am until 8:00 pm. The availability of the accessible voting appliance was advertised online and on the voter information cards circulated to eligible electors across the city.

The accessible voting appliance consisted of a tactile controller with large buttons distinguishable by shape and colour. Each button had a Braille label next to it. The device itself was connected to the vote tabulator and connected to the device were a set of headphones, and at the voter's option, a set of paddles or a sip and puff device. At the request of a voter, the device could be used to allow the voter to vote independently by listening to instructions and the names of each candidate through the headphones. Though the process could take more than twenty minutes, by pressing buttons on the tactile controller (or by using paddles or the sip and puff device) a voter would cause a ballot to be marked using a dedicated printer connected to the vote tabulator. The printer would produce a marked ballot that was indistinguishable from a normal paper ballot marked by hand. The ballot would be output into a special secrecy folder, and from the secrecy folder be deposited into the vote tabulator where it would be scanned and tabulated like every other ballot used in the election.

Every candidate was invited to speak their name into a recording device so that the pronunciation of their name would be properly made for any voter using the accessibility device. In the 2018 Municipal Election, no voters requested use of the accessible voting appliance provided at City Hall.

White VOLUME buttons for changing the audio volume

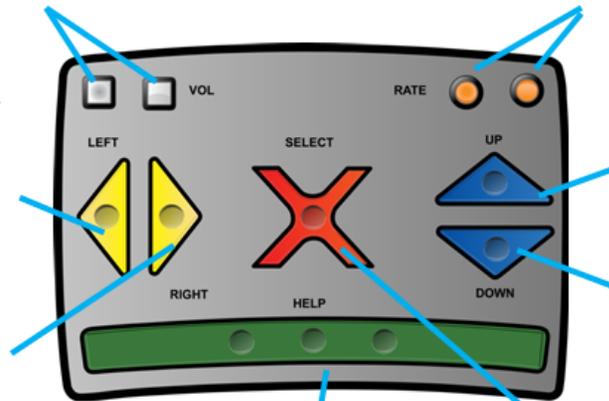
Orange RATE buttons for changing the audio speed

Yellow LEFT arrow for moving back to the previous contest

Yellow RIGHT arrow for moving to the next contest
OR when all contests are completed, use the **Yellow RIGHT arrow** to review selections, print and cast ballot

Blue UP arrow for moving to a previous instruction or candidate

Blue DOWN arrow for moving to the next instruction or candidate



Long green HELP bar for pausing the voting session, getting instructions, or getting poll worker assistance

Red X Shaped Select button for selecting choices
OR for selecting to print ballot when instructed

Assistance in Marking a Ballot

Pursuant to paragraph 4 of subsection 52(1) of the Municipal Elections Act 1996, Deputy Returning Officers were empowered to administer oral oaths to permit electors who needed assistance in voting to have such assistance as the Deputy Returning Officer considered necessary. Oral oaths were administered to both the voter and the person acting as the voter's "friend" in marking the ballot according to the voter's instructions. In some cases, election officials already having taken oaths to maintain the integrity and secrecy of the voting process, filled the role.

Proxies

Voters who were unable to attend a voting place during the advance vote period or on voting day, were able to appoint another eligible elector as their voting proxy in accordance with section 44 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996. Proxy voters could vote at

any of the advance vote locations or at the voter's designated voting place on voting day. 17 proxies were issued for the 2018 Municipal Election.

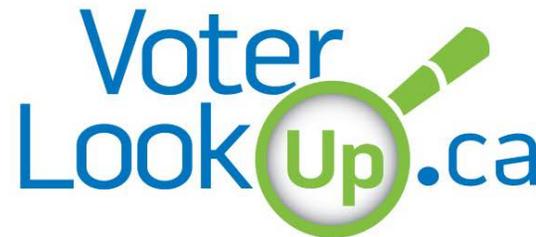
Curbside Voting

Offered for the first time in 2018, electors could schedule an appointment to cast their ballot by curbside. A layby lane at City Hall was designated for this purpose, and electors could park during the designated time where they would be received by an election official. The election official reviewed the identification against the voters' list inside and returned the identification with the appropriate ballot in a secrecy folder with a ballot marking pen for the elector to mark the ballot. The election official stepped away from the vehicle to allow the voter to make their choices privately, before returning the secrecy folder over with the marked ballot. The ballot was taken inside to the tabulator (with the marked ballot secure in the secrecy folder) to be cast. The election official returned to the elector one final time to confirm that the ballot was cast successfully. In total, 3 voters conducted a vote by curbside at Vaughan City Hall during the advance vote period.

Voterlookup.ca and "Am I On the Voters' List?" Applications

Continuing the practice from 2014, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) provided the ability to check and update the Voters' list online. The voterlookup.ca tool was available for five months. Once the preliminary list of electors was prepared by MPAC, the City of Vaughan continued the service by allowing people to add their name to the voters' list on a provisional basis. This meant that at the voting place, the voter only had to provide qualifying identification and sign a revision form to complete the requisite revision process and receive a ballot. In 2018, a total of 965 persons were added to the voters' list provisionally.

HAVE YOUR SAY.
LOG ON TODAY.



Other Devices

To assist those voters and election officials with visual impairments, magnifying sheets were provided as a standard supply item at every voting place. Election officials were also on hand to be able to provide guidance to voters on how to appropriately mark the ballot, with demo pads displaying the arrow field used on the ballots. The ballot as well as the voting screens contained an example to guide electors on how to appropriately mark the space on the ballot when voting.

Institutions – Retirement Homes

Pursuant to subsections 45(7) and 46(3) of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, dedicated voting locations were provided at nursing and retirement homes meeting the respective bed threshold set out in the Act. In keeping with practice from the 2014 Municipal Election, voting was provided at these institutions in either a morning shift from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. or an afternoon shift from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Posters indicating the hours of voting were supplied to the administrators of each facility in advance of voting in order to post and display for the benefit of electors resident there.

Communications and Training

Resources for Candidates

Included with the forms and documents provided to candidates through the Candidate Access Portal, was a digital copy of the Candidate's Guide to Accessible Elections, a joint publication from the Province of Ontario and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO). The document is designed to assist candidates in making their campaign accessible to voters with disabilities.

Municipal Election Website (www.vaughan.ca/elections)

The City of Vaughan's official website for the 2018 Municipal Election was integrated into the City's official website and all pages followed the City's guidelines and standards for accessibility and were designed to work on all browsers and on mobile devices. The Accessibility page of the election site provided an opportunity for voters and candidates to provide feedback on voting place accessibility and initiatives and tools designed to support persons with disabilities during the municipal election.



Accessibility Training for Election Officials

As part of the suite of training provided to election officials hired in support of the 2018 Municipal Election, all officials were provided with customer service training regarding their interactions with individuals with various disabilities and how best to provide service to those persons.

Conclusion

There were no significant barriers identified during the course of the 2018 Municipal Election that related specifically to electors with disabilities. Providing an election which is fully accessible to voters in the City of Vaughan remains a top priority for the Office of the City Clerk. In preparing for the 2022 Municipal Election, Election Services staff will:

1. Undertake outreach to organizations representing persons with disabilities;
2. Assess the feasibility of “home voting” offerings, involving a pair of election officials attending an elector at their place of residence to process a vote;
3. Explore the need for and feasibility of offering accessible transportation for electors requiring use of curbside voting or the use of an accessible voting appliance;
4. Provide additional advertising of the opportunity for curbside voting appointments and the availability of the accessible voting appliance; and
5. Incorporate the needs of persons with disabilities in any future consideration of the potential use of internet voting in a Vaughan municipal election.

The City Clerk / Returning Officer shall continue to make available opportunities to provide feedback from voters and candidates in working towards accessibility in municipal elections conducted in the City of Vaughan.

Feedback

The Office of the City Clerk welcomes your feedback on improving and enhancing election accessibility. If you wish to provide us with your feedback, you can reach us at:

Email: elections@vaughan.ca

Telephone: 905-832-8585

Fax: 905-832-8535

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